

SMS for Life ^[1]

In many resource-constrained countries, supply chain problems make it difficult to get essential medicines and healthcare commodities to patients in a timely fashion, particularly those living in remote areas.



To improve the management of drug inventories, SMS for Life was launched in 2009. Led by Novartis and supported by public and private partners, SMS for Life was initially launched to help prevent stock-outs of antimalarials in Tanzania, but it has since been rolled out in more than 10,000 public health facilities in Kenya, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cameroon. Over the years, the scope of the program has also expanded to more disease areas and health parameters.

Building on the success of SMS for Life, a new enhanced version, SMS for Life 2.0, was launched in 2016.

How SMS for Life works

SMS for Life aims to eliminate stock-outs of essential medicines through simple, affordable and widely available technologies – including mobile phones, smartphones and tablet computers, the Internet and electronic mapping. Each week, healthcare workers in primary and peripheral health facilities report medicine and vaccine stocks and disease surveillance data.

This information is visible to the district medical officers who are responsible for treatment availability. This allows all levels in the health pyramid to monitor and support the operations in the primary health facilities, and helps make fact-based decisions to better assess the adequacy of the resource allocation versus actual needs.

SMS for Life has clearly demonstrated it works in the targeted environment. It is flexible, expandable and scalable to support any number of additional health facilities, countries, products and disease areas.

The next generation: SMS for Life 2.0

SMS for Life 2.0 was launched in December 2016 in Kaduna State, Nigeria, together with the Kaduna State Ministry of Health and Vodacom. With SMS for Life 2.0, local healthcare workers use smartphones and tablet computers to track stock levels of essential antimalarials, vaccines, HIV, TB and leprosy treatments, and send notifications to district medical officers when stock levels are low.

The program also enables the monitoring of surveillance parameters for malaria, maternal and infant deaths and seven other diseases. Finally, healthcare workers in local facilities can be trained using on-demand eLearning modules.

Novartis signed a memorandum of understanding with the Zambian Ministry of Health to deploy SMS for Life 2.0 in up to 500 health facilities in the country's northern provinces. The program, which includes stock reporting, disease surveillance and eLearning, was developed in cooperation with Vodacom and launched at the end of 2017.

SMS for Life 2.0 is also under discussion in other sub-Saharan African countries. Further, the system could be extended to treatments against noncommunicable diseases such as diabetes or high blood pressure. A first roll out of an extended version will be launched in Pakistan in 2018 to register patients and enable accurate medicine stock management from warehouse to dispensing pharmacies.

[To learn more about SMS for Life, download the fact sheet \(PDF 0.5 MB\)](#) ^[2]

[Read stories about SMS for Life](#) ^[3]

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[2] <https://www.novartis.com/sites/www.novartis.com/files/factsheet-sms-for-life.pdf>

[3] <https://www.novartis.com/stories/access-healthcare/text-messages-africa-help-fight-malaria>